

Demonstration of Logical Inconsistency in the Discussion of the Problem of Evil

Authors : Mohammad Soltani Renani

Abstract : The problem of evil is one of the heated battlegrounds of the idea of theism and its critics. Since time immemorial and in various philosophical schools and religions, the belief in an Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Absolutely Good God has been considered inconsistent with the existence of the evil in the universe. The theist thinkers have generally adopted one of the following four ways for answering this problem: denial of the existence of evil or considering it to be relative, privation theory of evil, attribution of evil to something other than God, and depiction of an alternative picture of God. Defense or criticism of these alternative answers have given rise to an extensive and unending dispute. However, evaluation of the presupposition and context upon/in which a question is raised precedes offering an answer to it. This point in the discussion of the problem of evil is of paramount importance for both parties, i.e., questioners and answerers, that the attributes of knowledge, power, love, good-will, among others, can be supposed to be infinite only in the essence of the attributed and the domain of potentiality but what can be realized in the domain of actuality is always finite. Therefore, infinite nature of Divine Attributes and realization of evil belong to two spheres. Divine Attributes are infinite (absolute) in Divine Essence, but when they are created, each one becomes bounded by the other. This boundedness is a result of the state of being surrounded of the attributes by each other in finite world of possibility. Evil also appears in this limited world. This inconsistency leads to the collapse of the problem of evil from within: the place of infinity of the Divine Attributes, in the words of Muslim mystics, lies in the Holiest Manifestation [Feyze Aqdas] while evil emerges in the Holy Manifestation where the Divine Attributes become bounded by each other. This idea is neither a new answer to the problem of evil nor a defense of theism; rather it reveals a logical inconsistency in the discussion of the problem of evil.

Keywords : problem of evil, infinity of divine attributes, boundedness of divine attributes, holiest manifestation, holy manifestation

Conference Title : ICIPT 2020 : International Conference on Islamic Philosophy and Theology

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : December 10-11, 2020